

Notification of Funding Opportunity

Early Launch to Learning Initiative (ELLI)

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Commissioner of Education

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Proposal Due Date: October 14, 2004

<http://www.nj.gov/njded/ece/>

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I. PROGRAM INFORMATION

1.1 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

This funding notification is to announce the availability of funds for the Early Launch to Learning Initiative (ELLI) to increase access to preschool for four year olds by approximately 20,000 children in the 2004-2005 school year. It is intended that the number of districts and the budget will increase yearly until all interested districts are included. The initial appropriation of \$15,000,000 for FY05 will fund approximately 4,000 low income children's participation. The other 16,000 children will be paid for through braided funding using a combination of existing district funds (general fund or other funds), collaboration with Head Start and child care, and parent tuition. The classes will be comprised of children with disabilities, children from low-income families and children supported through other means. Districts already receiving Early Childhood Program Aid, with the exclusion of Abbott districts, are eligible for funding to increase from half day to full day programs. Districts already serving low-income children, that are not receiving ECPA funding, are eligible to use ELLI funds if they plan to enhance or expand their existing program.

Early Launch to Learning Initiative FY05

Cost of low income children:	\$15,000,000
Districts Eligible:	474 (All non-Abbott districts, ECPA districts could increase to full-day)
Anticipated Districts Funded:	75-125

It is the intention of the DOE that districts implement this program beginning on the 1st day of school in January, 2005. Applications that provide a high degree of assurance that they are able to open in January 2005 will receive priority. However, given the short timeline and the DOE's interest in including as many districts and children as possible, districts that submit applications for a later start date will be considered.

1.2 ELIGIBILITY TO APPLY

Districts with the following characteristics are eligible to apply:

- Districts that currently serve elementary aged children.
- Districts that already offer preschool for children without disabilities may apply to expand their current program to serve more children or to offer longer hours. If a district has an existing program that already serves low-income children, the district may apply for ELLI funds for all income eligible children but must enhance or expand this program.
- Early Childhood Program Aid districts that do not expend ECPA funding on 1st-3rd grade are eligible to apply to expand their program to full day.

- Districts may form a partnership or consortium to apply for and implement the ELLI program. One district or another agency may be selected as the fiscal agent.
- Abbott districts are not eligible for this funding.

To be eligible for this award, districts must send the head of curriculum and instruction or the equivalent person to a mandatory Technical Assistance Session and Curriculum Showcase which will be held on September 10, 2004 at the Ramada Inn and National Conference Center of East Windsor, NJ. The district representative must pre-register by August 30, 2004. Registration materials will be available on the DOE website by August 23, 2004.

1.3 STATUTORY/REGULATORY SOURCE AND FUNDING

The application and implementation of the program must be in conformance with all applicable state and federal regulations. A total of \$15,000,000 is in the budget for this program in FY 2005. The Department of Education has previously granted awards amounting to \$2 million and anticipates funding another 75-100 districts.

1.4 DISSEMINATION OF THIS NOTICE

The Department of Education, through the Office of the Early Childhood Education, made notice of the award opportunity available to eligible districts in the State of New Jersey, as described in Section 1.2, Eligibility to Apply. Superintendents, Chief School Administrators, and Department of Education county superintendents and assistant commissioners received notification of availability of these funds via correspondence dated August 17, 2004.

Copies of this application are available on the NJDOE web site <http://www.nj.gov/njded/ece/> or by contacting the Office of Early Childhood Education at the New Jersey Department of Education by telephone (609) 777-2074; or by fax at (609) 777-0967.

1.5 PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

The Department of Education *will not accept a late proposal*. The responsibility for a timely submission resides with the applicant. The Application Control Center (ACC) must receive an original and four copies of the complete proposal **NO LATER THAN 4:00 P.M. ON October 14, 2004. Without exception**, the ACC will not accept a proposal received after this deadline. The applicant agency will not be eligible for an award if the proposal is received after the due date.

The original, four (4) copies, and a PC-formatted computer disk file of the proposal must be mailed or delivered to:

Application Control Center
New Jersey Department of Education
River View Executive Plaza, Building 100

P.O. Box 500
Trenton, NJ 08625-0500

To ensure timely delivery and receipt of the proposal, the applicant is encouraged either to:

- hand deliver the proposal to the address above which is located next to Mercer County Waterfront Park on Route 29 in Trenton, between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday (excluding state holidays) and obtain a dated receipt; or
- send the proposal by Certified Mail, Return Receipt Requested; or
- arrange for delivery by an overnight delivery service.

Postmarks are not acceptable evidence of timely submission. Receipt by the due date and time is required. The applicant is encouraged to obtain a receipt or signature upon delivery to verify NJDOE receipt. Complete proposals are those that include all elements listed in Section 3.2, Proposal Component Checklist of this notice. The proposal received by the due date and time will be screened to determine whether it is, in fact, eligible for evaluation. The NJDOE reserves the right to reject any proposal not in conformance with the requirements of this program application.

Proposals submitted by fax can not be accepted in any circumstances.

1.6 REPORTING

Reports on program implementation and fiscal accounting will be required in a format that will be available at the time of award. An interim report will be due on March 31, 2005 and a final report on July 31, 2005.

1.7 DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS

Award funds will be disbursed in 6 payments of 16.7% of total award per month. Five percent (5%) of the total award is withheld until receipt of final expenditure report. All funding is contingent upon verification of enrollment of low income children.

II. PROJECT GUIDELINES

Applicants must submit a completed Early Launch to Learning Initiative Three Year Operational Plan and ELLI Budget Statement, using the forms provided by the Department of Education.

2.1 PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

- The district shall have an existing or newly established Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) or its equivalent. The purpose of the ECAC is to provide information to the district on community resources and the needs of children and families within the community. An additional purpose of the ECAC is to ensure that this initiative will not adversely affect area child care or Head Start providers. The council must include

representatives from the school district, child care providers, Head Start (if applicable to the district), and other community or municipal agencies interested in young children. A letter of support from the ECAC members must be provided with the proposal that documents ECAC contributions to the development of the ELLI plan and approval of the proposal.

- The district must have space to operate classes or arrangements with existing child care or Head Start agencies for collaboration. In the program application, districts may submit a plan for future expansion of the preschool program (i.e. districts may start with a small number of classrooms with a plan to increase over time).
- The program day must offer at least a 2 hour and 45 minute to 3 hour half day schedule or a 6 hour full day schedule and follow the regular school calendar.
- Children with disabilities must be included in the proposed general education preschool classrooms. This is beneficial for all children, in compliance with federal and state law, and offsets costs since the cost of serving children with disabilities is already in the district budget.
- Regardless of setting, class sizes of 15 to 18 children are preferred but up to 20 are allowed with evidence of highly qualified teachers with preschool credentials and experience;
- Regardless of setting, each classroom must have a teacher with the appropriate Department of Education license and a teaching assistant.
- Funding follows the low income children (eligible for free and reduced lunch) and there must be evidence that they will be served. Estimates of the low income population should be based on the number of 1st grade children eligible for free and reduced lunch. In some cases, children whose family circumstances merit special consideration due to hardship may be included in the count of low income children funded by the State. The classes must consist of a mix of children with disabilities, state-funded low-income children, tuition-funded children (parent payment) or children funded by the district general fund. In other words, mixed income and mixed ability classes must be offered. An exception to the mixed income requirement will be made for Head Start classrooms due to income eligibility requirements for this program. However, there must be other classrooms that serve mixed income children in the district.

The proposed program must implement an approved evidence-based curriculum model and must meet the Office of Early Childhood Education's *Preschool Teaching and Learning Expectations: Standards of Quality*. Districts must send the head of curriculum and instruction or the equivalent person to a mandatory Technical Assistance Session and Curriculum Showcase which will be held on September 10, 2004 at the Ramada Inn and National Conference Center of East Windsor, NJ. The district representative must pre-register by August 30, 2004. Registration materials will be available on the DOE website by August 23, 2004.

Although not required, the following factors lead to more competitive proposals:

- Meeting most or all of the *Abbott Preschool Program Implementation Guidelines* which delineate higher standards;
- Collaborating with private child care or Head Start agencies to offer the ELLI program. Additional consideration will be given to programs that collaborate to offer full-day and full-year programs (before and after school and during the summer). Or, funding child care or Head Start to upgrade their program by reducing class size and hiring certified teachers ;
- Including innovative approaches that will meet the specific needs of children and families in the community by partnering with other agencies. Examples of such programs are preparing high school students for careers in early childhood education by assisting in the preschool classroom, implementing dual generation programs that help parents learn work place skills, or initiating a grandparent program with a local senior citizen center;
- Offering dual language programs (e.g. English-speaking children learn Spanish while Spanish speaking children learn English in a systematic and well-planned curriculum.); and
- Offering a preschool/child care program for the full school day. At least half of the day must meet the criteria for class size and teaching staff listed above and meet the *Preschool Program Implementation Guidelines*. Half-day or some half and some full-day preschool programs will be considered if the district can show that half-day more appropriately serves the needs of their community.

2.2 COST PROPOSAL

Costs of Half-day Programs

For half-day programs of no less than 2 hours and 45 minutes to 3 hours, the funding would cover \$2,000 for each child eligible for free or reduced lunch, for programs operating from January 2005 to June 2005. Estimates of the low income population should be based on the number of 1st grade children eligible for free and reduced lunch. Families over 200% of the poverty level may be assessed tuition up to the full cost. In some cases, children whose family circumstances merit special consideration due to hardship may be included in the count of low income children funded by the State. Districts must determine what to charge and how to allot their own resources but all ELLI and parent generated funds must be spent on the preschool program. This also applies to ECPA districts applying to increase to a full-day program of at least 6 hours.

Costs of Full-day Programs

For full-school day programs of at least 6 hours, the funding would cover tuition for children eligible for free lunch or reduced lunch at \$4,000 for each child eligible for free or reduced lunch, for programs operating from January 2005 to June 2005. Estimates of the low income population should be based on the number of 1st grade children eligible for free and reduced lunch. Families over 200% of the poverty level may be assessed tuition up to the full cost. In some cases, children whose family circumstances merit special consideration due to hardship may be included in the count of low income children funded by the State. Districts must determine what to charge and how to allot their own resources but all ELLI and parent generated funds must be spent on the preschool program.

ALLOWABLE USE OF FUNDS

Funds from this initiative may only be used to cover the program for four year old children. The eligible population for ELLI funds is defined as the following:

- Children who will meet the district-established birth date cut-off for kindergarten in the subsequent school year;
- Children who meet residency requirements of the applicant district(s) (Districts may join together to offer this program); and
- Children whose families are eligible for free or reduced lunch. In some cases, children whose family circumstances merit special consideration due to hardship may be included in the count of low income children funded by the State.

ELLI funds may be braided with other funding sources and may not be used to supplant funding for children with IEPs or ECPA funds. ELLI funds may only be used for the following categories:

- Instructional salaries and benefits,
- General classroom supplies,
- Professional development for instructional staff (including the costs of training staff in a chosen research-based curriculum). If collaborating with private child care or Head Start agencies, instructional staff from those agencies must be included in all professional development opportunities, and
- Contracted services from private child care or Head Start agencies.

Other costs of the program should be funded through district general fund, special education funds, and parent tuition. If private child-care agencies contract with the district to provide a preschool program, they may not increase their profits through student co pay or tuition payments. Tuition for the regular program day cannot be assessed to children with disabilities.

III. COMPLETING THE APPLICATION

To apply for funds under this program, each applicant must submit a complete ELLI Three Year Operational Plan including all excel tables and the 2004-2005 budget worksheet, both in print and on a PC-formatted computer disk. In subsequent years, only plan revisions and yearly budgets will be required.

Required Sections	Included
Award Proposal Title Page	
Table 1: Enrollment	
Table 2: Class Size	
Table 3: Teachers	
Overview	
Program Component Activity Forms	
Statement of Assurances	
Letters of Support	
Signed Board Resolution	
Table 4: Budget Statement	
PC-formatted computer disk	

IV. AWARD SELECTION

4.1 Distribution of Awards

In making awards under this program, NJDOE will ensure, to the extent practicable, a distribution of awards among the geographic regions of the state.

4.2 Proposal Review and Scoring

Committees consisting of DOE staff and other early childhood education experts will evaluate all eligible applications. The application is evaluated on the basis of quality, comprehensiveness, completeness, accuracy, and appropriateness of response to the guidelines and requirements. Applicants may request information about their evaluation scores by writing to the NJDOE Application Control Center. The NJDOE reserves the right to withdraw from consideration any application that does not include each and every component to be evaluated and scored in the evaluation process.

The application must receive a score of at least 65 points out of 100 to be eligible for funding. Eligible applications are ranked and funded in descending order, from highest to lowest score, until available funds have been used.

Reviewers will use the following Scoring Rubric to evaluate applications:

(1) Outreach and enrollment plan

10 pts

- The program will begin operation on the first day of school in January, 2005
- Effective methods of recruitment are detailed
- Methods will attract hard to reach families and indicate a commitment to serving a large proportion of low income children in mixed ability/ mixed income classes
- It is evident that the plan is based on knowledge of community needs

(2) District-wide planning with evidence of community partnership through the Early Childhood Advisory Council;

20 pts

- The ECAC has been established and has convened [If not, the district is ineligible.]
- The ECAC membership reflects broad representation of stakeholders
- Collaboration with community agencies serving young children and their families is evident
- Actual contracting with community child care and Head Start agencies or collaborative arrangements to serve children for more than the regular school day is evident [Automatic 5 points.]
- Letter(s) of support, included in the application, provide evidence of the involvement and agreement of the ECAC with the application

(3) Curriculum development and implementation;

30 pts

- The district will implement one of the curricula introduced at the Curriculum Showcase [Automatic 10 points]
- The curriculum is comprehensive and designed to help teachers and children meet all of the *Preschool Teaching and Learning Expectations: Standards of Quality*
- Transition plans show effective articulation and communication from preschool through grade three
- Innovative approaches for meeting children's needs are evident [see Project Requirements section above]
- Clear and evidence-based methods for meeting the language needs of children who are English language learners are described
- Teachers and other staff are highly qualified and have experience with preschool education
- Class size is no more than 20 [Automatic 5 points for class size of 15 – 18]

(4) Professional development and training;

10 pts

- The professional development plan is systematic and comprehensive
- Teaching staff will receive on-going support from knowledgeable supervisors/administrators

(5) Inclusion;

15 pts

-
- All classrooms will include children with disabilities [Automatic 5 points.]
 - No more than one third of the children in any classroom have disabilities. [Children are served in the natural proportion that they are found in society – i.e. If 10% of the preschool population have IEPs then an average of 10% of the children in each classroom have disabilities, Automatic 5 points]
 - The program is designed to provide appropriate supports for children with disabilities during the regular routine, such as adaptive activities and materials, adjusted schedules, and integrated therapies (pull out is rarely used)
 - Teachers will receive consultation from special education staff and other experts (It is not necessary to have special education teachers in each classroom.)

(6) Program evaluation;

10 pts

- The program evaluation plan will result in valid information that will be useful in program development and planning for individual children
- With the exception of developmental screenings and diagnostic testing or random assessment as part of an experimental research design, no standardized testing will be administered on preschool children. Instead, performance-based assessment will be administered

(7) Budget Tables;

5 pts

- The proposed budget uses ELLI funds only as allowed [If not, the district is not eligible.]
- It is evident that the program will be efficient
- Funds generated through tuition will not be used for any other program or costs
- The budget is clear and based on the number of income-eligible children who will be served.